

# Lincoln Castle Academy

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18<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

A heartfelt thank you to you, our LCA community, for the support you have shown us during this incredibly difficult time. As our Chair of Governors, Mr Rawding commented, it really has felt like a merry-go-round for some families. As students settled down to a Christmas pantomime this Thursday afternoon, a number of last-minute changes were announced by the Department for Education. This letter includes important updates for parents and carers, including revised term dates and the work required to set up a Covid-19 Test Centre in readiness for students' safe return.

## **Covid-19 Update**

We have been fortunate to have relatively few cases of Covid-19 amongst students. Since my last update on 11<sup>th</sup> December, I have been informed of 2 further confirmed cases of Covid-19 amongst LCA students. One student had been at home for some time and close contact tracing has been actioned as required. This brings the total number of student cases to 27 for the entire Autumn term (3% student population). Only 2 cases remain as 'active' with all other periods of self-isolation having now ended. Whilst infection rates are relatively low, we have had to send many students home as a 'close contact' precautionary measure. To date, 65% students have had their education disrupted and have missed days in school as a result. We have had no cases amongst staff; an indication that our control measures remain effective. As previously communicated, a small team will be available to follow up close contact tracing up to and including Christmas Eve. Any confirmed cases amongst LCA students, in line with the attached guidance, should be reported to: [enquiries@lincolncastleacademy.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@lincolncastleacademy.co.uk).

Whilst 1 or 2 days do not significantly impact your child's education, several weeks of disruption can make it hard for students to re-engage on their return to the academy. We have observed some students have less confidence in their own abilities, and we are working hard to address this. We encourage parents to support our efforts in simple ways. Explaining a concept or topic to someone else, or simply revisiting and improving work within exercise books/ study notes are incredibly valuable revision methods, particularly for those students with exams coming up in 2021.

## **Next Term – Important Updates**

On the afternoon of 16<sup>th</sup> December, the government announced that secondary schools will now operate a staggered return in January. Students in non-exam year groups (Y7,8,9,10,12) will be provided with remote education during the first week of term. **Face-to-face education for all students will start on 11<sup>th</sup> January**. The government also announced that secondary schools should establish a Covid-19 Testing Site on the school grounds. The government sees this measure as an important way of minimising disruption during the spring term. On-site rapid testing of staff and students is intended to identify positive cases when pupils return to face-to-face education following the Christmas break.

Whilst I welcome this measure to enhance our controls and keep our community safe, this **is a significant undertaking**, communicated to school leaders with ½ day of the school term remaining. A testing centre requires staff, training, rooming, cleaning and is logistically complex and time consuming. It also depends on parents' co-operation, consent and confidence in our arrangements, which will be entirely new to all of us. I will write to you in January with more information following the planning process which is underway, but I appeal to any parents or former students keen to support this community endeavour to let us know of your willingness to volunteer your services via: [enquiries@lincolncastleacademy.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@lincolncastleacademy.co.uk)

In light of these changes, the following arrangements replace all previous communications for the start of term in 2021:

**4<sup>th</sup> January 2021**                      **Staff Inset Day**  
**5<sup>th</sup> January 2021**                      **Year 11, Year 13 students return to school\* (same times as Autumn Term)**  
**\*Year 13 students should still adhere to the arrangements set out in Mr Roe's previous letter**  
**11<sup>th</sup> January 2021**                      **Year 7, Year 8, Year 9, Year 10, Year 12 students return to school**

- Students should arrive in school at the same time as the Autumn Term arrangements, except for Year 9 students who now begin at the earlier time of 8.35am.
- Students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and Year 12 will receive remote education during the first week of term.
- From 5th January, provision will be in place for students regarded as 'vulnerable' and for the children of critical workers who are unable to remain at home.
- All existing safety arrangements will remain in place with staggered arrival and departure times, year group bases and the requirement for all students and staff to wear face masks in communal areas and on public transport.

The first weeks of January include vocational exams for many students. Year 10 Engineering students should attend school for a revision day, beginning at 9am on Friday 8th January ahead of their exam on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Year 10 students should also attend their 'Access Arrangement' appointments during the first week of school; our SEND Team will issue reminders after Christmas.

### **And finally...**

Each year the GCSE History exam contains a 16-mark question about a significant moment in history. As Mrs Edwards, our Head of History pointed out, we are all currently living through a future 16-mark question! We hope Christmas will provide some time to rest and reflect on the challenges of this term. Humour, rather a lot of coffee and a tremendous community spirit have helped us to endure.

Some LCA families have experienced hardship and challenge during this period and we thank those of you who have supported with donations for our Friday Food Bank. We have decided to continue this initiative throughout next term and would like to remind families to get in touch if you require assistance.

Whilst I do not intend to write to you during the holidays, in these uncertain times I cannot guarantee the need will not arise. Changes made on the penultimate day of term have placed us under significant pressure. We will meet the challenges, as we always do, but I request your cooperation and patience. In keeping your child at home (unless Y11 or Y13) until 11<sup>th</sup> January, you will be supporting us as we work to implement a safe return for all.

I hope those of you who have experienced Covid-19 first-hand in your families continue to recover. I hope the Christmas period is restful and restorative for all.

Mrs Laming  
Headteacher